Gunnerkrigg Court

Chapter 95:

Tendril

I just can't believe it, ROBOT.
we trusted you, right from the beginning.
and...
this really shouldn't be shadow's responsibility to tell me what you did.
I know, kat, but he can't talk!

all this time, I knew you were interested in my work, but I didn't think you were, like...
secretly plotting behind the scenes.
the whole boat thing was you?
oh, robot.
and these guys?
it sounds like they became fanatic because of you, robot.
ah - we -
save it.

and - and!
what really gets me...
is that he tried to pull one over on such a sweet kid like you, shadow.
I know, I should have told you I thought something was going on.
don't apologise, shadow, you didn't do anything wrong.
and, with all the stuff going on right now, we have other things to think about...

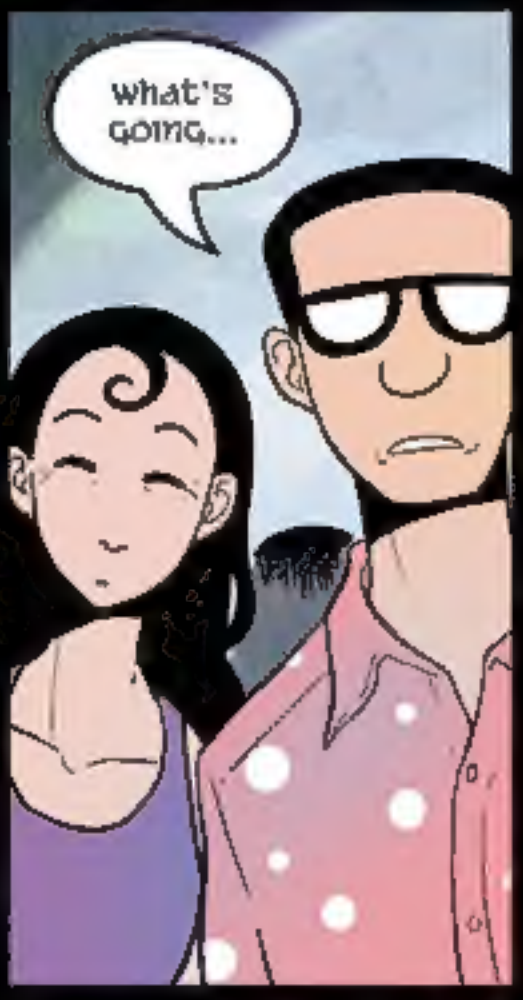
most of my equipment is intact, but the seeds annie and the others brought back...
I'm not sure what to do with them.
and just look at you, robot, I don't even know what I'm looking at.
It's like when I'm looking at something etheric and annie sees something completely different...
?
hmm...
...
hah, I miss paz.

SHFF
Kat! your father!
Remember your father!
SHFF
...
Wha, I -

SHFFF

Wha! I remember this place!
I visited here when I was little... I think my mum and dad were married here.

kat?


What's going...

omega!

h-hey!
BWIP
dammit!
did - did you just call that lady omega?!
I'm so sorry, kat... that woman... she's the living embodiment of the omega device.
and she just kidnapped my parents?!
my father, too, I'm afraid.
why didn't you tell me earlier?! I have so many questions!
why does omega need our parents?
are we still in the court?
and why are you all burned?!

omega... I thought she would be on our side, but she wants to keep the distortion going indefinitely!
she took my father because he can take her to places in the court we don't know about.
so I thought I should find someone who knew him... someone like mr. donlan.
I didn't think she would take him, too!
she's actively trying to stop us.
hmm...
and your clothes?
oh...

We figured out that we can move through the distortion by thinking of either people or locations.
So we tried to think of Zimmy, in order to get right to her...
But we ended up somewhere that was so full of monsters, we had to leave immediately.
A vile place!
Perhaps some sort of defense mechanism by Zimmy, the poor creature.

so... this person is some kind of walking, talking, kidnapping computer...
and she can see and hear everything you say or do...
that's kinda what the omega device does, right?
and every time we think of someone who can help, she beats us to them!
well... why didn't she come for me?
if she did I'd blast her on sight.
oh! maybe we can lure her into the open so we can do that...
but now that you said that aloud, she'll be expecting it...
DARN...

But I did think of something that~
Wait, wait!
Don't say anything!
If she can really see and hear everything, she's always going to be one step ahead!
Hmm... but she can't look into the ether.
Renard and I can talk that way
Okay, but that doesn't work on me...

can we try . whispering our idea to you?
really quietly?
no, look, if she can really see the movement of atoms, then anything like that will give us away
writing it down?
same thing, annie
is there anything you can do with this magic computer of yours?
well...
huh
so... you said we can travel by thinking?

Look at this mess!
the distortion turned half my stuff into plants!
Running diagnostic.
Okay, somehow, things are still working
Let's get back to the workshop.

wow... so you can't even plan anything if you aren't talking in the ether?
not without omega knowing what we are doing, no.
you know, the ex-forest creatures and fairies in my classes were always hanging out in the ether
their work was integrated into the court
maybe they have some ideas about access the ether?
well, we can talk to them at least.
it's not like omega can kidnap them all...
don't say that!

SHIFT
OOF!
ARE YOU OKAY, RENARD?
YES, YES. THIS METHOD OF TRAVEL REALLY DISAGREES WITH ME, THAT'S ALL.
WOAH..
WHAT ARE THESE THINGS

I'll talk with them
It's strange... these tenaris only exist out here, not in the ether
otherwise, they're happy enough.
huh.
you've said they did a lot of work for the court?
astrophysics, yes.
oh, so their work might have been used in the star ocean?

Say, are they okay?
they seem tired, I suppose.
they're more active in the ether, though. they sort of leave their bodies on autopilot.
what's that one doing in the ether?
she isn't covered in these vine things
hmm.
she she's not there

w-what does that mean?
oh my god, annie, she's...
hey, look, these vine things come off them and just go straight into the walls!
oh - ah, really? how interesting...
yeah, look!
there's nothing...
no spirit to take into the ether, nothing.
she's just... gone

ahem I hear the court's star ocean contraption is in some way metaphorical...
perhaps that is what is happening here?
gee, that could be!
like the work these guys have done for the court is represented by these vines?
possibly...
shadow, did you ever do work for the court like they did?
haha, no way! my brain doesn't work like theirs.
I just learned regular stuff, I guess
MATH
ENGLISH
SCIENCE
(etc)

my father said the star ocean is burning etheric energies to run, and that the distortion is giving it more power
now that I look at them closer in the ether, I can see it's burning energy from them too.
they seem to be unaware it's happening ..
but it's similar to when I could see andrew's powers, only now it's draining ether from them.
I ~ I just can't believe the court would do something like this..
it's okay, annie.
I wish I could see it like you do.
I feel useless .

a-are there any teachers around?
maybe they know what's happening here.
huh! I dunno...
oh, hey!
look who it is, annie!
snuffle!
and... friend.

oh no. he's covered in vines, too!
?
...
he won't come out of the ether.
snuffle is fine, just very tired.
are there any others that don't have vines?
bugsy!

Oh no... She would have worked for the court when she was younger...
she
she's asleep.
NNN
Gluh!
Poke
oh, it's you.
Ms. Bugsy, I'm so glad you're okay!
I think the students are in danger!
the work you've been doing for the court, can you show it to me?
huh?

didn't you notice anything else strange?
like what?
ms bugsy, the students who worked for the court are being drained of their ether..
look... this girl..
her spirit is gone.
uh...
and this means...

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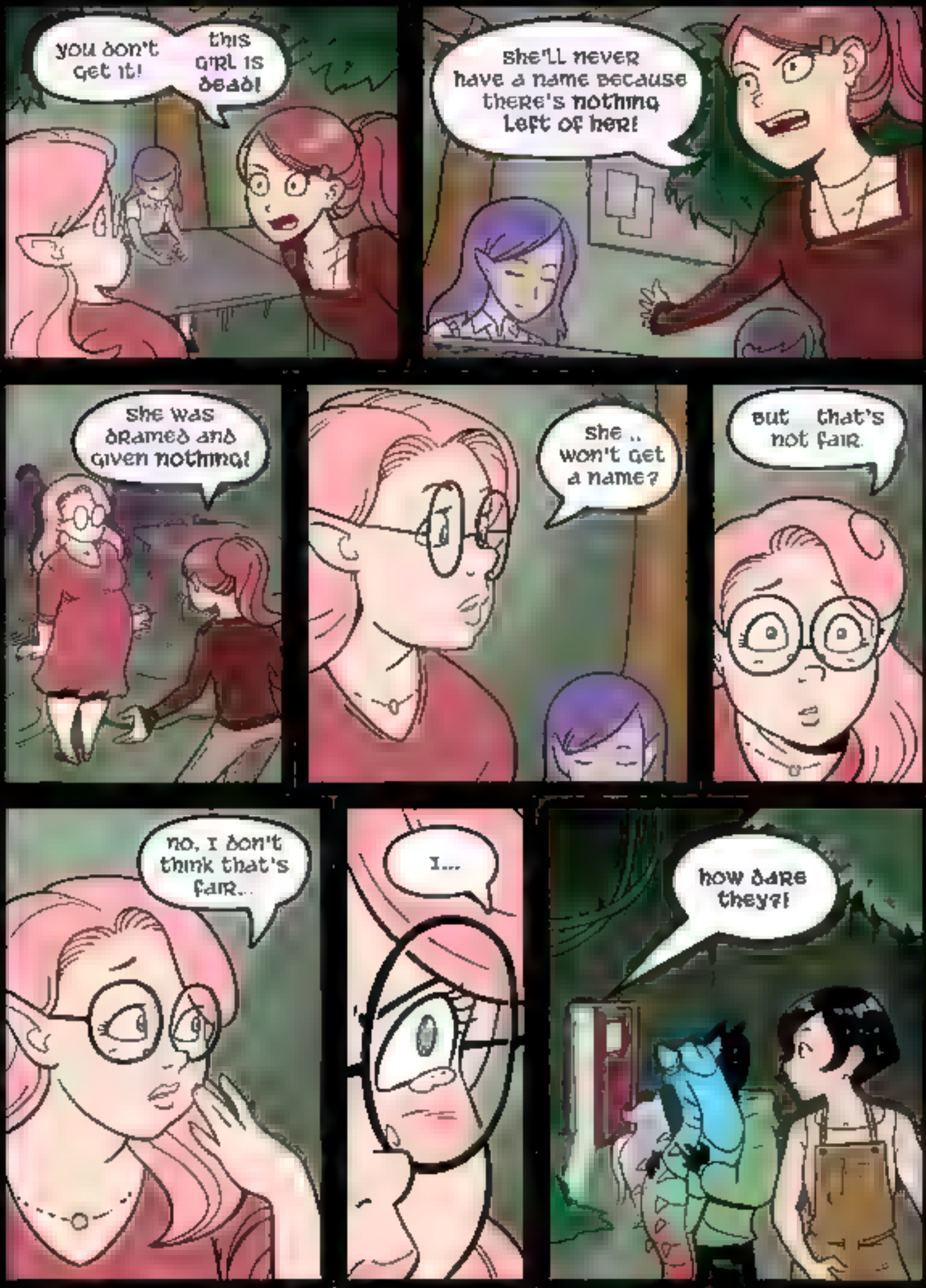
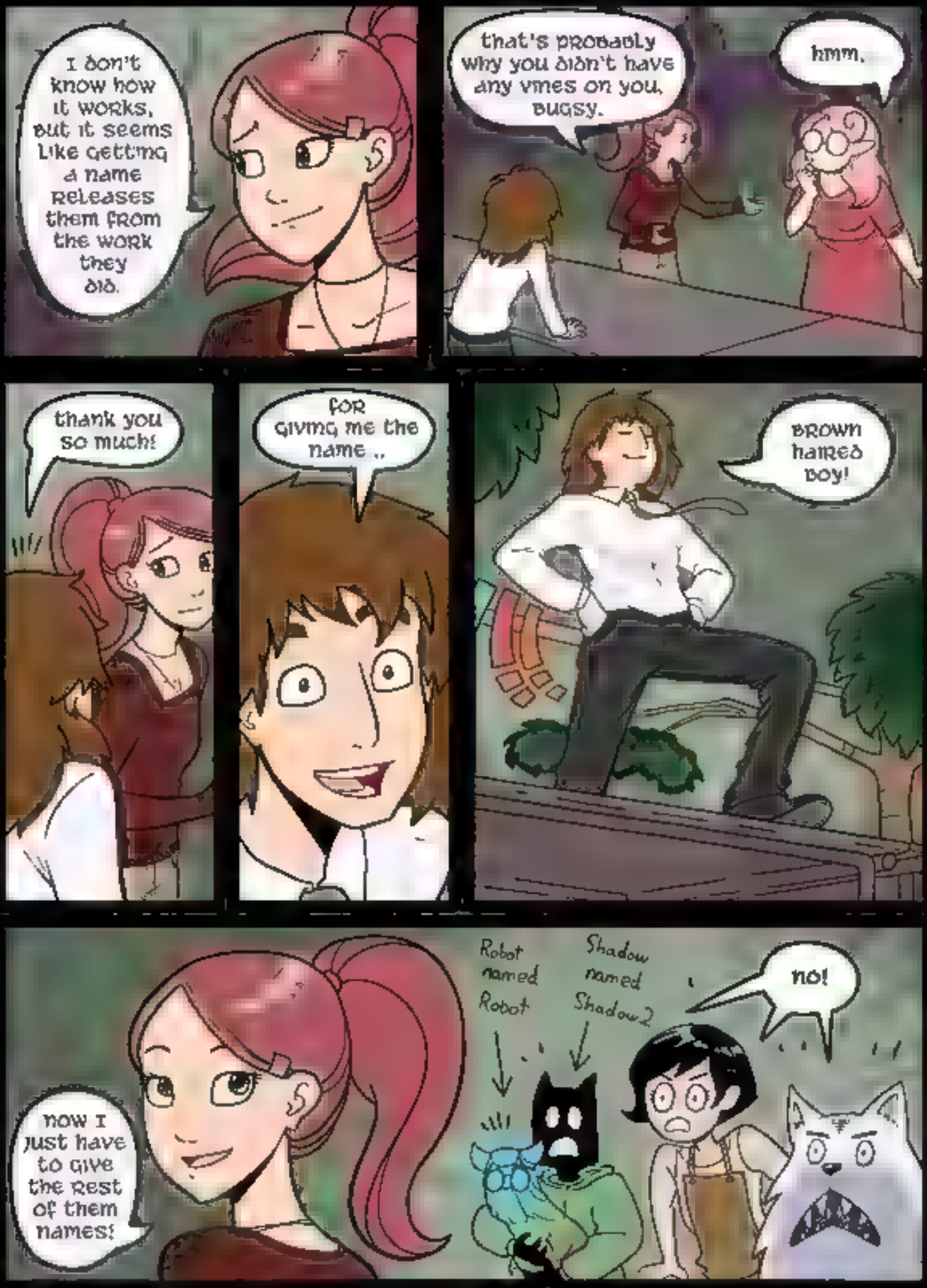
these tendrils, they feed directly into the court, likely into the star ocean!
the wha?
and here in the distortion, that work is literally draining them!
I don't know what you're talking about, but we all agreed to this.
Like me.
I did my work and I got a name and I'm my own person!
the whole reason these guys do all the work they're given is because they're promised a name at the end of it.
whatever happened here sounds like a HER problem haha!


you don't get it!
this girl is dead!
she'll never have a name because there's nothing left of her!
she was drained and given nothing!
she .. won't get a name?
but that's not fair.
no, I don't think that's fair...
I...
how dare they?!

hey, what's up?
we have to help them! how could they?!
okay, okay, yes! we do have to help them!
let me try something.
wha! hey!
oh!
I gave him a name!


I don't know how it works, but it seems like getting a name releases them from the work they did.
that's probably why you didn't have any vines on you, Bugsy.
hmm.
thank you so much!
for giving me the name..
BROWN haired boy!
now I just have to give the rest of them names!
Robot named Robot
Shadow named Shadow 2
no!

sorry, annie, naming things just isn't your strong suit...
look, here
oops...
oh right, my material transporter is messed up now.
anyway, this is supposed to be a book of names.
miss, all you have to do is pick any one at random and give it to a student
me?!
yes! ms. bugsy, you have the power to do it yourself!

wow. . to think something like this could exist...
names... you can just use!
I'll do my best!
we'll help you find others too, so you can help them
we can't let what happened to this poor girl happen to anyone else
yes, yes.
I don't think omega will interfere with this.
she wants the distortion to continue but . I don't think she's a cruel person.

hey!
It worked!
my name is Karla!
very good!
we have to go for now, but we'll be back to check on you.
Nod Nod
I'm taking some of the seeds to study.
I just have to figure out what to do with them.
oh, well, generally, what you do with seeds...
is plant 'em.
huh

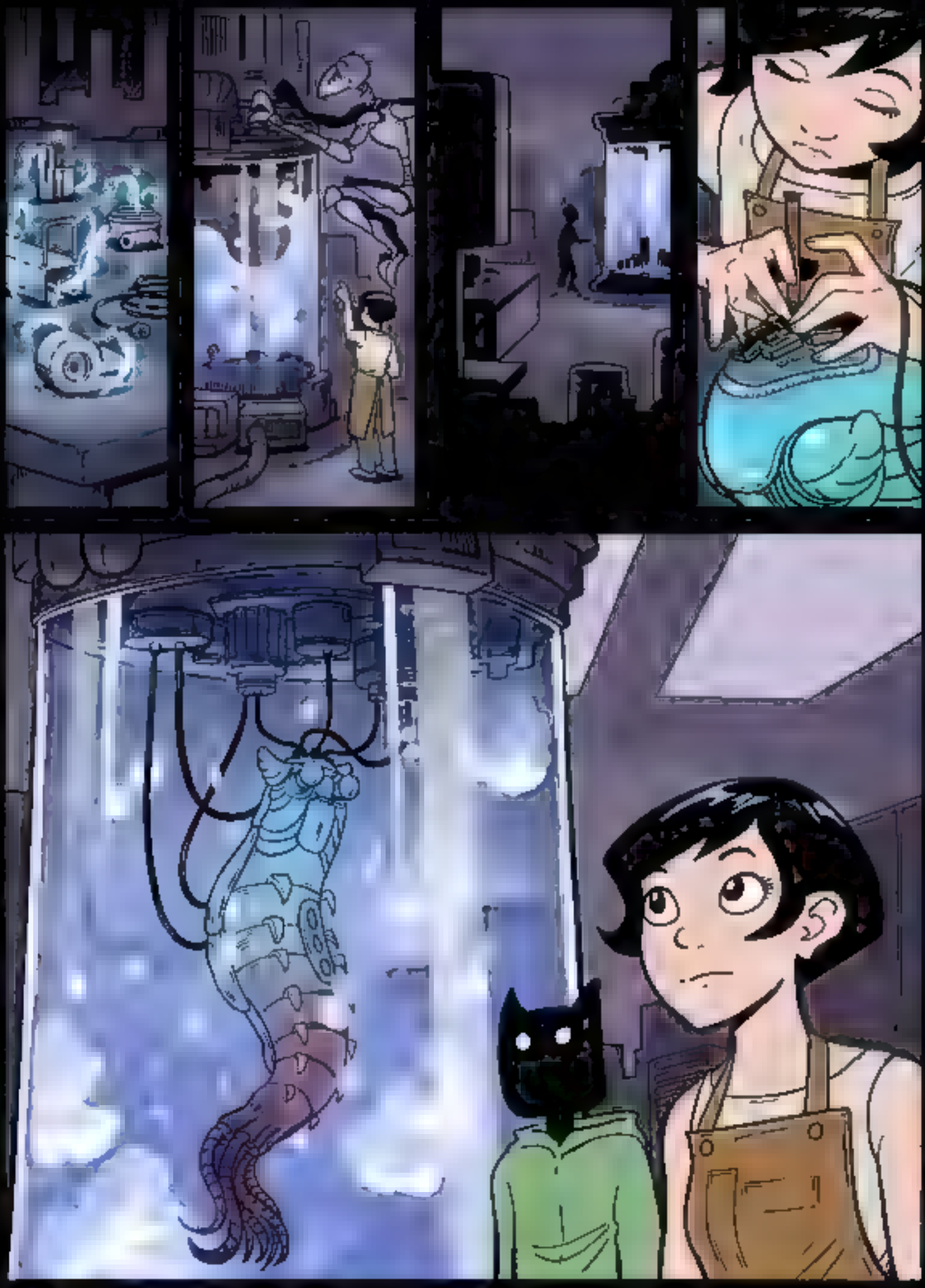
well, let's see how this g-
umm, kat, is that okay?!
woah!

yeah, yeah...
that's an old workstation, it's not connected to anything...
but...
Click
TAK TAK
I can access the information!
most of this is just data for interpretation...
but if these tendrils can interact with mundane technology, I'll take it!

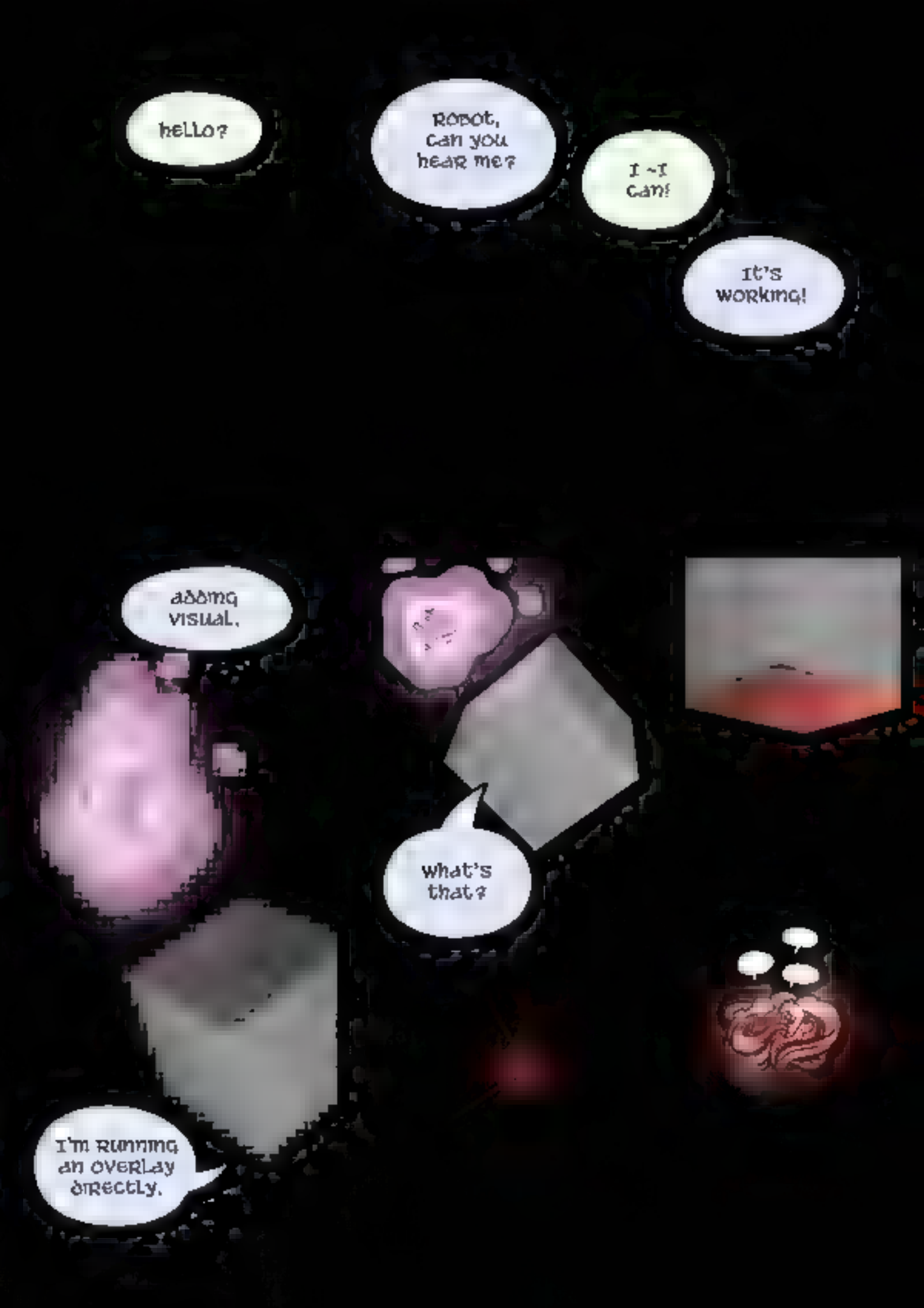
seeing how these things spread, I don't want to risk connecting these to my main computer.
not yet, anyway...
but...
hmm... If I can make a hardware interface...
and an interpreter...
ah. to see her work..
you're lucky you even get to be here
...

I'm betting the cpu seeds will work the same way.
If I can access one, we might be able to see how the distortion allows the ether to interface with my equipment
But I don't want to risk damaging one...
ahh!
SWISH
SWISH
ROBOT... you... want to volunteer?
Nod Nod
well I'm not going to bury you!
but I may not have to...

I still have my old growing vat!
Okay, you guys, time to make yourselves useful
I'm going to need some hydroponic equipment.
Renard, are you okay?
You seem a little subdued.
I'm not sure.
Recall your bunny friend. His fairy girl was with him, exhausted.
Even though she never worked for the court.
Indeed. She was not covered in tendrils.
I think all etheric creatures are being affected.
At first I thought it was just when we traveled in the distortion
But I can feel it in me, too.



ROBOT!
It's okay, Shadow. I hoped it would go like this.
this is good. this is good.


hello?
Robot, can you hear me?
I -I can!
It's working!
adding visual.
what's that?
I'm running an overlay directly.

What the devil
annie!
Renard! I can see you!
you guys look so cute!
kat?!
why are you a cube?

a cube?
oh, that's just the default
how's this?
I made this model a while back, but I haven't updated it since.
you figured out how to look into the ether?!
well, yes and no.

I'm able to identify and intercept I guess what you would call the ether.
and transmit, too! my computer sends it all to me directly
It's all thanks to Robot, really.
hello.
Robot?
Is he okay?
oh, you can't hear him?
hmm.
I could [illegible] something about that in the future...

kat, if I may ..
oh, hang on, annie.
once again, you have given me the ability to speak.
and so,I must give you my sincerest apologies
c'mon, man...
I mislead you and the others. I potentially put you all in danger.
but... worse than that...
you have spent so much of your time and concentration on me, helping me and all of my fellow robots...
and I was willing to throw that away.

to squander your effort...
to disrespect it in such a way...
It is unforgivable, unthinkable...
whoa, whoa!
I am not asking for forgiveness
but I do want to begin to make amends
look, robot...
you're still our friend. I am mad at you, but I know I'll get over it
and you already are making amends you're already helping us

analysing your new body helped me make more than just an interpreter for the ether.
the same way the seeds interacted with my equipment, the connection your body made let me reverse engineer a connection to the ether.
it's what we've been searching for!
but still... how can you ever trust me again?
that's a tough question, robot. one that i'll have to think about.
but in the meantime, don't worry.
we'll be sure to make you pay!
oh! i ~
i'm just joking!

just hang in there, robot. I'm excited for how I can help you next!
hey, I'm back!
do you think we're safe from omega, now?
at some deep level she might be able to see the movement of molecules in my computer and the interpreter it uses for the ether...
but that'd be like trying to read a printout of an encrypted message.
you can see the letters and numbers, but it's meaningless until you decode it.
I'm guessing she's not that kind of computer.

good... that's what I was hoping!
now, we can go over our plan.

Gunnerkrigg Court

Just For Us